

**Legislative Testimony**  
**Public Health Committee**  
**HB 6483 AA Requiring Students Playing the Position Of Goaltender In School**  
**Athletic Programs To Wear Mouth Guards**  
**Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013**  
**Dr. Summer Lerch**

Dear Members of the Public Health Committee,

I have been a general dentist since 1982. I attended the two year Family Dentistry Residency at University of Connecticut from 1982-1984. Since then, I have attained my Fellowship in the Academy of General Dentistry acknowledging a commitment to continuing education. In 1991 I was Accredited in Cosmetic Dentistry by the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry. I own a small dental office that concentrates on smiles and healthy gums/teeth in New Haven, CT across from Yale Medical School. I have participated in Doctor's With a Heart, Give Kids A Smile, Mission of Mercy and other ADA/CSDA public service activities. And as a mother, I have been active in protecting my son's teeth all the way through sporting activities from age five up to now. I further believe that mouth guards can enhance sports performance, which moves these appliances beyond just protecting the teeth and lower facial structure.

As I watched my son grow-up, while cringing at the elbows, the falls, the ski poles, the baseball bats, and with his friends, the hockey sticks, I realized that if I were not taking the lead in this with him, no one would. His pediatric dentist mentioned it once. His coach thought it was a good idea, but did not pursue them nor require their use. At least in ski racing the young kids are required to wear chin guards attached to their helmets during slalom events so when the racing ski poles fling back the lower face is protected. I had my son in mouth-guards as often as he would wear them from age 5 on as mouth guards can diminish the severity of injury, pain and inconvenience, not to mention the trauma that can come from extensive dental treatment.

Mouth guards are not expensive and do protect against further injury, pain/suffering and extra dental work. For under \$5.00 at a local sporting store a "boil and bite" type oral appliance can be bought and fitted. More a more custom fit, particularly for the older athlete who may have stopped growing, a dental office fitted appliance might be better. These can range from \$200-500 depending on company, function it is used for and type of material.

Shin guards are required for all soccer training and games. Let's have mouth guards follow. In an Internet search about mouth guards and trauma, almost every study came to the conclusion that athletes have a higher than normal incidence rate of trauma to the mouth (over the general public;) that they know about mouth guards; that they know they should wear them and yet the studies found the mouth guards were not worn. Several studies concluded with the statement that the wearing of such should be mandated. Good for you that you are here discussing this issue.

As a member of the CSDA, the trusted leader and voice for oral health care in Connecticut, dedicated to the profession and the public I urge the Public Health Committee to adopt **SB6483, An Act Requiring Students Playing the Position of Goaltender in School Athletic Programs to Wear Mouth Guards**. This bill will make our kids safer, lowering injury

and oral health care costs. Further, the CSDA is happy to serve in any capacity that you may deem useful should this bill move forward. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

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